



Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

200 West Baltimore Street • Baltimore, MD 21201 • 410-767-0100 • 410-333-6442 TTY/TDD

September 6, 2005

Dear Principals:

Once again, the Maryland State Department of Education is pleased to announce this year's *Together We're Better* Essay & Poster Contests in recognition of National Inclusive Schools Week, December 5 - 9, 2005. This week provides an opportunity for schools across the nation to celebrate the diverse abilities of all students. In addition, it signals the importance of providing equal opportunities for children with disabilities.

We believe this contest will enhance school-wide awareness of inclusive practices while engaging the students in an activity that will create a sense of caring and community. At the same time, students will have an opportunity to collaborate in a meaningful way with one another while reflecting on what inclusion means to them. Inclusive schools are characterized as those that:

- Make every student feel welcome and provide the supports they need to learn;
- Embrace the understanding that every student is unique, and therefore learns differently;
- Understand that all children learn better if teaching is tailored to their abilities and interests;
- Collaborate with families; and
- Hold high expectations for students' success.

We are pleased that each year more and more schools and students participate in National Inclusive Schools Week. Details of the Essay and Poster Contests are enclosed. You may also visit the Maryland State Department of Education's website www.marylandpublicschools.org or The Arc of Maryland's website www.thearcmd.org to download all of the materials, including a copy of this year's Celebration Kit, which contains unique ideas and activities to support National Inclusive Schools Week.

In addition to your participation, we wish to acknowledge the support of this year's partnering agencies, The Arc of Maryland, the Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education, the Maryland Department of Disabilities, and the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Tonia Ferguson at (410) 974-6129 or email: tferguson@thearcmd.org.

Sincerely,

Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

NSG/CAB:tf
Enclosure

c: Local Superintendents
Branch Chiefs/Section Chiefs

2005



2005

2005 Elementary School Poster Contest

About our Contest

The theme for the class poster contest is "Together We're Better." The purpose of the contest is to raise awareness during National Inclusive Schools Week, December 5-9, 2005. We are asking students to create a class poster that explores why inclusive schools are so important and how students with disabilities contribute to their schools and communities, in a positive way. In what way do we make all who come to our school feel valued? How do we show members of our community that they count? How do we all contribute as members of the community? Here's an opportunity for your students to think about the uniqueness and importance of kids with and without disabilities being friends and helping each other.

Who May Enter

Grades 1 - 6 in a public, parochial, or private Elementary school in Maryland may submit a class poster. Home-schooled children who reside in Maryland, grades 1- 6 are also eligible. This includes children with and without disabilities.

Contest Deadline

The deadline for receiving entries is November 28, 2005. Entries must be mailed or delivered to:
"Together We're Better Essay" Contest
C/o Tonia Ferguson, The Arc of Maryland
49 Old Solomon's Island Road, Suite 205
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

All class posters are the property of The Arc of Maryland, Inc. Winners will be notified by phone. Class posters may be used in public forums.

Rules

Class posters must include the words "Together We're Better" somewhere on the poster. This contest is a whole class project, so everyone should be involved in some part of the process. Some students may just be involved in the planning, while others' construct the poster. Or the whole class may be involved in the construction. Creativity of all levels is encouraged. The class may use any medium to paint, draw, cut, and paste or write on the poster. You may even be able to put some digital photos on it. The sky is the limit on your class's creative participation. A copy of the included entry form must be filled out and securely attached to the back of the poster. Print all information clearly and fill the form out completely. All necessary accommodations and modifications will be provided for students with disabilities to participate.

JUDGING

A first, second, and third place prize will be awarded for the class poster contest. There will also be 6 honorable mention certificates awarded. Judging of the entries will begin the week of November 28th. The winners will be announced during the week of National Inclusive Schools Week which is December 5-9, 2005. Judges will consist of members of the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, The Arc of Maryland, individuals with developmental disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, coordinator of the Class Poster Contest, and members of the community. Judging will be by the committee and will be carried out in a fair and professional manner. The entries will be judged on the following criteria:

- The guidelines set forth in the rules
- The class ability to effectively convey the theme "Together We're Better"
- The originality of the poster concept
- The use of media
- Creativity
- Overall impact of the class poster

Winning Entries/Prizes

Winning entries will be displayed in a "Parade of Posters" at the Awards Reception and schools and classes will be posted on the website: www.inclusiveschools.org. Winners will receive a party and teacher gift certificates, compliments of the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council and the Maryland Department of Disabilities, sponsors of this contest. Schools who have a winning class in the contest will receive House and Senate Citations. The prize levels are as follows.

Elementary Class Poster Contest		
First Prize	Class Party	Teacher prize: \$300.00 gift certificate to Learning How
Second Prize	Class Party	Teacher prize: \$200.00 gift certificate to Learning How
Third Prize	Class Party	Teacher prize: \$150.00 gift certificate to Learning How
Honorable Mentions	3 Classes from Grades 1-3.	3 Classes from Grades 4-6.

Additional Information

PLEASE PACK POSTERS FLAT. DO NOT ROLL! Posters will not be returned. We reserve the right to disqualify a poster that contains artwork of a negative nature, or does not conform to the guidelines set forth in this letter. Please email tferguson@thearcmd.org with any questions about the class poster contest or contact Tonia Ferguson at (410) 974-6139.

" Together We' re Better" 2005 Elementary Class Poster Contest

Entry Form

Deadline: November 28, 2005

Please fill out completely and attach the entry form to the back of the poster.

School: _____ Grade: _____

Teacher: _____

School Phone Number: _____

By signing this form, the teacher gives The Arc of Maryland, Inc. permission to use your information and class poster at their discretion to publicize and promote the class poster contest and inclusive lives.

Signature of Teacher: _____

Official use:

Judge's use only: FINAL SCORE _____